

HINTS

ON THE

ORDINANCE

OF

A GOSPEL MINISTRY;

CONTAINING

I. *A Short DEFENCE of the
OFFICE of a Gospel-Min-
ister.*

II. *The CALL and QUALIFI-
CATIONS requisite for the
Ministerial office.*

III. *The PRINCIPLES and
TENDENCY of the SCHEME*

*of LAY-PREACHING Con-
sidered.*

Together with

IV. *A Candid EXAMINATION
of some Passages of Sacred
Scripture, which have been
interpreted as favouring
that Scheme.*

BY

A FRIEND TO ORDER IN THE CHURCH.

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I.—*A Short ILLUSTRATION of the Office of a GOSPEL* MINISTRY.

THE friends of the scheme of Lay-preaching pretend, that they do not mean any thing injurious either to the character or office of a minister of Jesus Christ. It will be difficult, however, to reconcile these professions with the general principle which they have adopted, That "preaching the gospel is the duty of all who are taught of God." If by this they intend nothing more, than that it is the duty of saints, according to the station they occupy in the visible church, to declare and recommend the truths and laws of Jesus Christ in their christian conversation, and by a godly life; there are few who will be disposed to controvert the opinion. But if they intend by it, that such as are taught of God, and sustain only a private character in the church, are nevertheless bound, with all the publicity and authority of a gospel-minister, to preach the gospel of Christ unto others; it will be difficult, nay impossible, to reconcile this principle with their professions of regard to the ministerial character and office. If all those who have tasted

that the Lord is gracious are bound by his authority to act in such a public capacity, then the work of a gospel minister can no longer be the special employment of this or the other individual, but must of necessity be the common concern and employment of all those who believe. The office of a gospel-minister would thus be founded upon a claim to sainthood, and the church would have as many ministers as there are saints in her. Or rather, she would have none at all who sustained a more public character than belonged to her members in common: For what is the common employment of the whole, cannot be the special business of any one.

It will not free our brethren from this embarrassment to tell us, that "there is a material difference between a settled pastor over a people, and the person who goes into the world to proclaim the riches of divine grace." The call of the people is necessary to fix the relation betwixt a minister and a particular part of the church; but this call does not invest him with any office-powers which he did not possess before. The gift of office is conferred by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, and not by the members of the church at large. Nor will it contribute in any degree to the support of their cause to inform us, that Itinerants are not to interfere with the work of a regular ministry, by the dispensation of baptism and the Lord's supper. When our blessed Lord sent forth his disciples, it was to baptize as well as to preach, Matth. xxviii. 19. and the great apostle of the Gentiles suggests, that preaching is more honourable than baptizing. Such persons as are vested with authority

rity to preach, are vested with authority to baptise also. Nor will it be of any advantage for them to insist, that they are such only as are gifted, and have opportunities in providence for the exercise of their gifts, that are to go forth in a public capacity, and proclaim the riches of divine grace unto others. This principle is even more hostile to the office of a gospel-minister than the other. It sets the office entirely aside, and founds the whole warrant for a ministerial compulsion upon the gifts with which the person is endowed. In this case, the magnifying of his office would be both foolish and unreasonable; but the extolling and commending of his gifts would be a reasonable service. He could not invite, entreat, and beseech *as* an ambassador for Jesus Christ. The office, in this case, is entirely thrown aside, so that neither pastor nor itinerant can magnify his office.

It may likewise be observed, that if the possession of mere gifts, and an opportunity in providence for the exercise of these, laid a person under obligations to go forth, and, with all the publicity of a minister of the gospel, to proclaim the riches of the grace of God unto others, then every member of the church must appear, occasionally at least, upon a public scene in her. There are few men so shut up in providence, as not to be now and then in public; and there are as few who have not received at least one talent to occupy. But the man who has received only one talent is no more at liberty to wrap it up in a napkin, than another is who has received ten. The fewer those talents are with which a person is endowed, he has the greater need to lay them out to the best advantage.

tage. And, if this principle is admitted, according to the measure of his ability and opportunities, every man must be bound to go forth and preach Christ unto others. This would call forth the whole members of the church to a public ministry in the gospel.—In whatever light the scheme of Lay-preaching is examined, it gives a deadly thrust at the office of a gospel-minister—it abolishes at once all distinction between public and private characters in the church, and has the most direct and immediate tendency to throw every thing in this society into the wildest anarchy and confusion.

More effectually to oppose this bane of religion, this source of error and corruption in the church, it may not be improper to instruct the warrant for a gospel ministry. And if it can be shewn from the holy scriptures, that the King and Head of the church has made a distinction between public and private characters in her, and provision also for a regular dispensation of all gospel ordinances by an instituted ministry, it must follow as a necessary consequence from this, that the scheme of lay-preaching is unwarrantable.—In defence of a gospel-ministry, the following things may be observed :

1. The Levitical office was judged necessary for the edifying of the body of Christ under the Law; and no man, however well qualified, either by gifts or graces, or by both, was permitted to take this office unto himself, but he that was called of God, as was Aaron, Heb. v. 4. The duties of this office were so numerous, and of such importance, that the Levite was to have no inheritance among his brethren, lest by turning his attention to mat-

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ters of a secular nature, the duties of his office might be neglected. Provision was made for his temporal subsistence in another way. This servant of the church was to be supported by the members of the church. He had even a more liberal maintenance afforded him than the rest of her members had. And that there might be public teachers in every part of the country, the tribe of Levi was scattered among all the different tribes pertaining to the children of Israel.—Was the office of the Levite judged to be of such importance of old, that the whole tribes belonging to Israel were charged, in the most solemn manner, to bring all their tythes into God's store-house, for the support of these men whom he had called to minister before him in holy things? And were these ministers of the Lord interdicted from entangling themselves with the affairs of this life, that they might devote their time and talents to the ministry which they had received? And, is it reasonable to suppose, that the church in New Testament times is left without public teachers, or an instituted ministry? The conversion of sinners, and the edifying of the body of Christ, are matters of as great importance in present, as they were in former times. And while men continue to be ignorant of God, and of the things of God, an office analogous to that of the Levite's must be perpetually necessary. That love which prompted our great Redeemer to send forth labourers into his vineyard formerly, will not permit that his vineyard, which is still before him, should lie as an uncultivated field now.

2. In Old Testament times, the members of the church were directed to look forward unto the last

last and best times of the New Testament church, and confidently to expect that there would be an instituted and regular ministry in her, Isa. lxvi. 21. "I will also take of them for priests, and for Levites, saith the Lord." Ezek. xlv. 15, 16. "The priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok—shall come near to me, to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me, to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord God. They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge;" and in verse 23. we are told, that they shall teach his people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. It is abundantly manifest, from the scope and connection of these passages, that they have a reference to the last and best times of the church. The first respects that happy period when a nation shall be born at once; and as soon as Zion ^{travels} ~~travels~~, she shall bring forth children. It looks forward to a period that is yet to come, when the infidelity of the Jews shall be destroyed, and this ancient people shall be gathered out of all countries whither they have been scattered, and shall be brought for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations. When this period arrives, *the Lord shall take of them for priests and for Levites.* Not that the Levitical priesthood, or any thing peculiar to the Old Testament dispensation, will be revived; but from among these long outcasts there would be some called and qualified to occupy a public station, and dispense the various ordinances which belong to the New Testament church.—The second of these texts refers to the same happy state of the church

church, when the glory of the Lord shall fill the house of the Lord: and in both passages there is a marked distinction between public and private characters in her. The Levites, and the priests the sons of Zadok, are pointed out as quite distinct from the body of the people among whom they are to labour.

But if the work of a gospel minister is to be performed by all them that believe, then, not only the Levites, and the priests the sons of Zadok, but the whole tribes of the New Testament Israel must come forward and minister at God's table. Were there no particular order to be observed in the admission of persons to the exercise of a public ministry in the church, why is the prophet commanded, ver. 5. to pay such attention to the laws and ordinances of the house, to the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary? The whole of the following context hath a relation to a gospel ministry; and the very particular attention which the prophet was to pay to every going out and in of this spiritual temple, seems intended by the Spirit of God to shew how careful the office-bearers of the church in her best times would be, to proceed according to the rules of the word in admitting candidates for office to a fellowship with them in the ministry of the gospel. But why is there any mention of priests or Levites, if the work of teaching the people, and serving at God's table, is the common employment of all them who believe? Or why is such attention to be exercised about the admission of any to this employment, if every person that is gifted may take it up at his own hand?

3. The names of office, which are applied unto some prove, that a gospel ministry is of divine institution, and that their office is not held in common among all them who believe, but by some only. There are many different designations given them in the word: all these are more or less descriptive of that office, the duties of which they are called to discharge, and the character they are bound to maintain. They are called *Pastors and teachers*, and God is said to have *set* them in the church. If the distinction between a pastor and his flock, or between a teacher and his pupils is admitted, such a distinction must also suggest to us the idea of public and private characters in the church. Now it is here said that he hath set, given, or appointed them; and this appointment doth not extend unto all, but unto *some* only. For God hath *set some* in the church; first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, 1 Cor. xii. 28. They are likewise designed *stewards of the mystery of God*, and *ambassadors for Jesus Christ*. Both these are names of office, and peculiarly expressive of the employment of a gospel minister. But if the ministerial office is a mere human invention, these official terms can have no meaning. With what propriety could any man be designed a steward of the mysteries of God, if God himself had not appointed in his house the high office of a spiritual steward? Or with what propriety could he be called by the name of an ambassador for Christ, if Jesus Christ, the King and Head of his own church, had not instituted such an office in her, and connected with that office certain powers with which

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the subjects of his kingdom at large are not invested? In the dominions of an earthly prince, there may be many persons better qualified to fill the office of an ambassador than the one who is appointed; but there is none who can represent the person, or speak in the name of this prince at a foreign court, except the one who has received an appointment from him to act in this capacity. And if there is any class of men in the church to whom the title of ambassador for Christ may be applied, then these men must have office-powers and authority which other subjects do not possess. They are called by various other names in scripture; such as watchmen, angels of the churches, servants of the church, workers together with God, &c.; from all which it is evident that ministers of the gospel hold their office by a divine right.

4. The reciprocal duties, which are binding upon ministers and people, manifest that the office of a gospel-ministry is of divine appointment. If this office were of human invention, the Spirit of God had never defined the duties of it; or were the work of a gospel minister the common concern of all who believe, we had never heard of special duties being incumbent upon some in relation to this work, which were not binding upon others. Were it a common employment, then the same duties which were binding upon one, would be binding upon every one. But there are many duties pointed out in scripture as lying upon those who are engaged in the ministry of the gospel, which are not incumbent upon others, and for the neglect of these they never will be blamed. In a particular manner, ministers are commanded to take the oversight of

of the flock of God, 1 Tim. iii 5. Not to neglect the gift which is in them, which was given by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, 1 Tim. iv. 14 ; to devote themselves wholly to the duties of their office, verse 15 ; and to commit that ministry which they have received unto faithful men, who may be able to teach others also. When Paul reflected upon the number and importance of those duties which were binding upon ministers, in reference to the objects of their charge, he was obliged to cry out, " Who is sufficient for these things !" And when he reflected upon the doom of those who neglected the duties of their office, he was obliged also to exclaim, " Yea woe unto me, if I preach not the gospel !" Shall the believer then be condemned with the unbeliever ? or shall all those who are endowed with gifts, and have opportunities in providence for the exercise of these, be consigned over to bear the dreadful effects of this woe, if they do not commence Itinerants, and go forth in the exercise of a public ministry in the gospel of Jesus Christ ? It cannot be refused, that there are duties binding upon some, in relation to the exercise of a public ministry in the gospel, which are not binding upon all who are eminently gifted, and have many opportunities in providence for the exercise of such a ministry ; and if this principle is admitted, it must follow, as a necessary consequence from it, That the work of a gospel minister is a special and not a common employment.

This truth is equally plain from those duties which are binding upon the people, in reference to such as labour in word and doctrine among them. If ministers are to devote their time and talents to

the duties of their office, the people are bound to aim at a corresponding improvement of their ministrations; and, in order to this, they are to wait upon their ministry; they are to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake; they are to pray much for them, and are to seek the law at their mouth.—These reciprocal obligations clearly recognize the distinction between pastors and people, and shew that the office of a gospel minister is of divine appointment.

5. The promise of assistance, which was given to the first ministers of the New Testament dispensation, carries in it an illustration of this truth, That the office of a gospel minister is of divine appointment, and will be continued in the church till the end of time. When our blessed Redeemer was about to ascend unto the throne of his glory, in virtue of that authority with which he was invested as head over all things, he sent forth his disciples to teach all nations, baptizing them; and, for their encouragement in this arduous work he told them, that they should have his gracious and special presence with them: "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." No person surely will say, that this promise is restricted to these first ministers of the gospel. It was to be fulfilled in their experience, as long as they were engaged in the exercise of a public ministry in the church: but this promise can never be accomplished in all the extent of its meaning, unless it refers to successors in office: such as came after them, vested with authority to preach and to baptize, might as confidently expect the fulfilment of it in their case, as the apostles might expect it in theirs. If the first ministers of the church

church were to have no successors in office, our Lord had never intimated that his presence would be with them to the end of the world. But as this promise looks forward, through all the different revolutions in the world, to the end of time, faithful gospel ministers in the present day may claim the fulfilment, of it ; and, animated and encouraged by the faith of Christ's presence, they may proceed with alacrity in the most difficult parts of their duty. And I am persuaded, that it is the encouragement contained in this and in similar promises of the word of God, which often prompts them to appear in the pulpit, when they would otherwise have absolutely declined that service. But if the work of a gospel-minister is the common employment of all who believe, what greater encouragement is held forth from this promise to one class of men than to another? Or if the office of a gospel minister is not of divine appointment, what other encouragement have those who are called ministers of the word to proceed in their work than the Itinerant has, who does not plead that he sustains any public character in the church at all?

6. A faithful gospel ministry are represented as a very great blessing to those parts of the world where they reside ; and the removal of these men by death or otherwise, is represented as one of the greatest calamities which can befall any people: But their presence could not be a blessing, nor would their departure be a curse, if the work of a minister of the gospel might be performed by all them who believe, or by all who are gifted for this employment. It is mentioned, as one of the heaviest judgments which were inflicted upon the Jews

in Babylon, that " their teachers were removed into a corner:" and one of the leading privileges which that people were to enjoy, upon their return to their own land, was, that " their eyes should see their teachers." It was threatened against the church of Ephesus, that except she repented, the Lord would come to her quickly, and remove her candlestick out of his place, Rev. ii. 5. Are such threatenings consistent with the idea, that the office of the gospel ministry is of human invention? If this office were not of divine appointment, it could be no judgment, but, on the contrary a great blessing, when those were removed from among them who pretended to fill an office in the church which her glorious King had not instituted. Nor can such threatenings be consistent with the universal right of gracious and gifted persons, to exercise a public ministry in the gospel. For if the scheme of preaching by persons not in office were lawful, no sooner were one minister of the gospel removed, than some gifted brother would shine in his room. As long as any pretensions to gifts remained, it is impossible, except in the case of wilful neglect, that a dispensation of gospel ordinances could ever be interrupted.

Admitting that God hath set some in his church, pastors and teachers, it may easily be conceived how the Ephesians, and other Christian congregations around them, might be deprived of that ministry which God had appointed: but if the right of exercising this ministry belongs in common to all them who believe, it is utterly inconceivable how any assembly of professing Christians could be altogether destitute of ministers. It is not to be supposed that there is any society of Christians upon

the face of the earth, where all the members are so destitute of natural abilities, that not an individual can be found among them who is able to say a few things for the edification of his brethren. The virtue of sermons does not depend upon their length, and it has as little dependence upon method and arrangement: The person therefore who is qualified to say a few plain things to his brethren, is capable, according to the modern definition of the word PREACH, of being employed in this work, and must be still better qualified to baptize. Thus it could not be considered as a judgment upon any people to remove their pastors, as the resources of that church would be always sufficient to make up for such losses. They would have no occasion to petition a neighbouring presbytery for pastors, much less would they need to invite them from a distant country to come and labour among them; for no sooner were their present pastors removed, than the gifted brethren could supply the loss.

From these considerations, the office of a gospel minister appears to be of divine appointment. And as this office is instituted by Jesus Christ, as a Son and Lord over his own house, there must be certain powers connected with it, which they who occupy only a private station in the church, have no warrant to assume. How absurd would it be for the lowest servant in a large family to exercise that authority which belongs only to the steward; or for the lowest subject in a kingdom to arrogate to himself those office-powers which have been conferred upon none but a prime minister, or an ambassador; and wherein does it appear to be more consistent with sound reason, that a man who fills only a private station

in the church should assume all the power and authority which belongs to office-bearers there?

II.—*The CALL and QUALIFICATIONS necessary to a Gospel Minister.*

IT is certainly a matter of very great importance, to those who would serve God in the ministry of the gospel, to know, and to be fully persuaded in their own mind, that they have a scriptural call to the office. Without this, they can have no ground to expect that their labours will be successful. On the contrary, they have every reason to fear, lest the great Head of the church should say of them as he did of the false prophets, "I sent them not, nor commanded them, therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord," Jer. xxiii. 32. The more that the glory of God and the interests of fellow-men are connected with this service, they ought to be more fully satisfied with respect to their call and warrant to engage in it. God may be dishonoured, and souls may perish, not only through the criminal negligence of some, and the preaching of another gospel by others; but even where the greatest diligence and zeal are manifested, and the precious truths of the gospel are declared, the same dismal consequences may follow, where the person has not been called of God to this work: hence the reason assigned why these prophets referred to could not profit the people is this, that *God had not sent them*

nor commanded them. Persuaded of the necessity of a scriptural call to the office of a gospel minister, as the only way in which persons have encouragement to expect that they will be successful, the apostle, with the very same emphasis of expression that he asks, "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" puts the interrogation, and says, *How shall they preach except they be sent?* Rom. x. 14, 15.

The anger of God has broken forth, in a very awful manner, against some who intermeddled in this work without a regular call. The case of Uzziah is a very remarkable one. "When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense," 2 Chron. xxvi. 16,—21. Notwithstanding the strenuous opposition which was made to him by the priests, the king remained obstinate in his resolution, till the Lord of the temple interfered, and put an end to the quarrel by smiting him with a leprosy, which did cleave to him to the day of his death.—The case of Saul is no less remarkable, 1 Sam. xiii. chap. The affairs of the children of Israel were scarcely ever in a more critical situation than in the period referred to. A numerous army was collected together against them, consisting of thirty thousand chariots, six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand of the sea-shore for multitude. The Philistines appeared as if they had been fully determined to avenge the quarrel upon their invaders, and either completely to ex-
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pel them from their country, or bring them into such a state of subjection, that they might have no occasion to be afraid of their power any more. This huge army was collected together at no great distance from Gilgal, where the camp of Saul was. The army of Israel on the other hand was very small, and greatly dispirited. Desertions were numerous; and such as remained with Saul followed him trembling. The delay of Samuel added considerably to the affliction of the people. He was both a prophet and a priest, and hitherto interested himself very much in all the public affairs of the children of Israel; but at this time they were ready to imagine that he was acting like one who had no longer their interest at heart. Saul waited for him till the seventh day; but despairing at length of his coming, and thinking that his only safety depended upon giving battle to his enemy as soon as possible, and that it would be worse than the heathen themselves to give battle to an enemy without having previously consulted the Lord by sacrifice and prayer, he "therefore forced himself and offered a burnt-offering," ver. 12. one would have thought that if ever an apology could have been sustained for any man, it must have been in the case of Saul. He offered sacrifice only once, and that too in a very great strait; yet for this invasion of the priests office, his kingdom was taken from him, and bestowed upon another.

I need not dwell on the illustration of these mournful proofs. Every person who has any acquaintance with his Bible must recollect, that on various occasions God has testified his displeasure in a very awful manner with those who intermeddled

in sacred things, without a regular call. Nor do I apprehend there are any who will plead, that no call whatever is necessary. Even those, who maintain that it is the duty of all who are taught of God to preach the gospel, must admit that certain qualifications are indispensably necessary to all those who are to be employed in this manner. But as the hinge of the present controversy turns upon this very point, it is necessary here to enquire more particularly into these things which characterize the minister who is sent of God, and distinguish him from all others who run without a commission.—The extraordinary call and qualifications with which apostles and prophets were favoured, is not now to be expected. But, as ordinary pastors and teachers are to be continued in the church till the end of time, the scriptures which are a perfect rule in other matters, are sufficient to guide our enquiries into this also, viz. How successors in office are to be admitted; or what may be deemed a scriptural call to the exercise of a public ministry in the church.—The following things may be observed :

I. A very considerable degree of acquaintance with the great and precious truths of the gospel, necessarily belongs to this call. Every one must see that that person can have no commandment from God to go forth and preach the gospel unto others, who continues ignorant even of the first principles of the oracles of God. The priest's lips are to keep knowledge, and the people are to seek the law at his mouth. But where the blind is leading the blind, both are in danger of falling into the ditch. Under such a ministry, the people must perish for lack

of knowledge. It will by no means compensate for his lack of knowledge in the scriptures, that he has been an indefatigable student, and has made great proficiency in human science. They are not the principles of philosophy, but the pure doctrines of the cross of Christ, which the Holy Spirit makes effectual for the conversion of sinners: and therefore his learning can be to no manner of purpose useful to souls, till once he become acquainted with the sacred scriptures. Let it not be imagined that it is intended here to depreciate a liberal education. Too little respect has been shewn to this, and the work of a gospel-minister has been considered by many as so very easy, that such an education might very well be dispensed with. But as long as human literature may be subservient to the study of the scriptures, and may enable the man of God more fully and clearly to illustrate and recommend the things of God unto others, it certainly demands his serious attention and regard. At any rate, some knowledge of those languages, in which the mind of God was originally committed unto writing, is highly necessary. It is altogether impossible for any one to discharge that part of the duty of a gospel-minister, wherein he is to appear particularly for the defence of the gospel, without this. Destitute of this knowledge, his faith must rest in the wisdom of commentators and translators. In those parts where critical skill is necessary, he cannot think for himself. And in all his critical defence of the gospel, he can shine only with a borrowed lustre.

2. There must be an aptness to teach; or a faculty of expressing the sentiments of the mind unto others.

others. Without this, a man's knowledge can be profitable to himself only: and while ministers of the gospel hold their office for the good of others, where there is not this aptness to teach, a person can have no scriptural call to the work of a gospel minister. There are some persons who are favoured with very strong natural parts, and who have clear and distinct apprehensions of religious matters, but being in a great measure destitute of the qualification now mentioned, their call to the office of a minister of the gospel must appear very dubious. To supply this defect, and in many instances as a cloak to laziness, the established churches in Britain and Ireland have admitted of *reading* instead of *preaching*. This practice is scarcely known in foreign churches; even the indolent clergy of the church of Rome have not to this day adopted it; *and* is manifestly contrary to the uniform custom of our Lord and his apostles, and that of all the first ministers of the New Testament church. Where this evil obtains, an ordinance is introduced into the congregations of the saints which is purely of human authority, and is maintained and countenanced there at the dreadful expence of excluding another which has all the high sanction of a divine appointment. Reading and preaching are two very different things: It is impossible that both these can be carried on in the same worshipping assembly at one and the same time. Accordingly, where reading is admitted, the divine ordinance of preaching, which is the wisdom of God, and the power of God to salvation, must be laid aside.

Not to mention the glaring insult which this practice offers to the Holy Ghost, as if the promise

of his assistance in the work of a minister, was not to be regarded; the reader offers a real insult to himself, by practically declaring his incapacity to perform the duties of the station which he occupies. It is not necessary to a minister that he be able to display all the graces of an orator, nor that he be capable of embellishing his discourse with all the tropes and figures of a rhetorician: the gospel of Jesus Christ stands in no need of these artificial ornaments. It never appears in such beauty, and it never recommends itself with such power to the conscience of the hearer, as when it is preached in plainness and simplicity. But it is indispensably necessary that a minister of the gospel be capable of addressing his audience in such a manner as that his expressions shall be level even to the weakest capacity. Where this gift of utterance, or aptness to teach is wanting, that person has reason to fear that he is running without being sent.

3. An acquaintance with personal religion, and a good report of them who are without, belong also to this call. How far a gracious God may countenance the ministrations of wicked men, is not our business to determine. He saw meet to employ the ministry of Judas, but this can be no precedent for others destitute of the power of religion to thrust themselves into the ministerial office: and no congregation who wish well to their souls' salvation, would desire to sit under the ministry of such men, let their other gifts and qualifications be ever so remarkable. It is impossible that these men can be willing to spend and be spent for Christ, who are still under the power of corruption, and in league with the enemies of Christ. Nor is it possible that they

they will travail as in birth till Christ, the hope of glory, is formed in the hearts of others, who never were in earnest about the salvation of their own souls. The preaching of the gospel is like the drawing of a bow at a venture. It is God only who can direct the point of the arrow between the joints of the harness, and make it effectual. But those who wish to be useful, will aim as near the mark as possible; and, in order to this, it is necessary that they have some experience of the Lord's gracious method of dealing with their own souls, that they may know how to suit their discourse to the case of those that hear them.

It is no less necessary that they be persons of a good report, lest they fall into reproach and the snare of the devil, 1 Tim. iii. 7. Unless the character of a minister be respectable, there is little reason to apprehend that his message will meet with a cordial reception. A blameless conversation is required of all the professors of religion, but especially of those who are to be as he-goats before the flock, 1 Tim. iv. 12. Where profligacy of manners is characteristic of any of those who occupy a public station in the church, this never fails to give occasion to the adversary to blaspheme; it brings a grievous reproach upon the good ways of the Lord; it defeats the very design of their office, and is a clear proof that they have no commission from Zion's king, to enter into his sanctuary, or come near to his table to minister before him.

4. Zeal for God, and an ardent desire of being useful to the souls of men, belong also to the qualifications of a gospel minister, and are leading parts in that scriptural call which is necessary to the ministerial

nisterial office. The first ministers of the New Testament church had a very copious measure of godly zeal. There was nothing that could shake their pious resolutions, that could daunt their courage, or make them unwilling to spend and be spent for Christ. They were filled with that zeal for God which is according to knowledge, and in their labours and sufferings their zeal was very conspicuous. A spirit of zeal is still needed; and in these times, in which the love of many is waxed cold, a copious measure of this spirit is very much wanted. Some portion of this zeal is necessary to the character of every Christian, but is peculiarly requisite for the minister of the gospel. A patriot, and will risque nothing for his country! a minister of Jesus, and hath no concern about his master's honour! these are strange contradictions. Without zeal, the minister of the gospel will endure no hardships, he will shrink back at the prospect of danger, and when the smallest temptation is thrown in his way, he will be ready to betray the cause of Christ into the hands of his worst enemies.

Equally unfit for the station and employment of a gospel minister is that man, who has not the eternal welfare of immortal souls lying very near his heart. Where it is not the prevailing desire of his heart to be useful, there is little reason to apprehend that his labours will be crowned with much success. When a person, like the Levite of old, thrusts himself into the priest's office merely for a piece of bread, he will not lose his reward. He may receive it in an hundred fold in this life, and in the world to come in a far greater proportion. The poor people who sit under his ministrations are
much

much to be pitied. It is impossible that he can be sincere in recommending a crucified Saviour as the bread of life unto them, while the perpetual cry of his own heart is, "Who will shew us any earthly good." He is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. Ministers are to take the charge of the flock, not by constraint, but willingly; not for the sake of filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: and where such a disposition is wanting, that person can have no call from God to the employment of a gospel minister.

5. An opportunity afforded in providence for a *stated* ministry in the word, is also necessary to the call of a gospel minister. As this observation, and the one that follows, are of principal importance in this cause, a fuller illustration may be necessary than there was occasion for in the preceding remarks.

Great zeal has been manifested by some, in the defence of Itinerancies by persons not in any public office in the church; but, as far as I know, it is not pled by any of the advocates for this scheme, that these Itinerants are under obligations to devote themselves to this as their only employment. An opportunity in providence is spoken ~~of~~ as a thing that is necessary to all those who would go and preach Christ unto others; this, however, is not mentioned as constituting any part of the Itinerant's call; but only as opening a door for the exercise of a ministry already received. And accordingly, where such a door is never opened, the man, who possesses the gifts and qualifications mentioned above, is vested with equal authority to preach Christ unto others, as the person is, who, together with these necessary

cessary gifts, has an opportunity for the stated exercise of them. If matters are to be considered in this light, then Jesus Christ has thousands of ambassadors who never were employed to deliver a single article of the gospel message: He has thousands of shepherds, who, instead of feeding, were never permitted to go abroad and attend for a single day to the state of the flock: He has thousands of stewards, who, instead of dividing to every one their portion of meat in due season, have not an opportunity of being employed in this manner in any season. Is it reasonable to suppose that our compassionate Redeemer, who has such a tender concern about the interests of his church, would permit so many thousands of her able and faithful ministers to remain in perpetual silence? But there are none who will plead, that the right of preaching Christ is something which is co-eval with any man's birth. And if no man has this by birth-right, there must be a concurrence of circumstances in one's lot to establish it. And where Providence has continually shut the door against the exercise of a public ministry, it is a sure evidence that that person never had any right from the great Head of the church to the exercise thereof.

Nor will it be a sufficient proof of his call to this ministry, that an opportunity is *now* and *then* afforded him. There are few persons who have not such opportunities. Upon the sabbath-day, they will occur unto multitudes; and even through the week, after the hours of stated labour are over they will occur unto many, especially in a large manufacturing city. If the possession of gifts, and occasional opportunities for the exercise of these, were

a sufficient warrant for an occasional ministry of the word, what pity is it, that some gifted brother does not preach Christ and him crucified to his fellow-tradersmen, before they separate! the instruments of his occupation should no sooner be laid down, than, with all the publicity and authority of a minister of Jesus Christ, he should compel them to come in, that Christ's house may be filled. Or, if they separate before he is in readiness to address them, why not issue a hand-bill, or employ a drum, or even the bag-pipe, to convene them together.

Let us examine this occasional ministry by the oracles of truth, and see if these oracles give any countenance to it. It is manifestly inconsistent with those directions which were given by Paul to his beloved Timothy; and as these are laid down in the scriptures not for him only, but for all those who were to come after him in the ministry of the gospel, they are to be attended to as a rule of conduct for gospel-ministers in our time also. Now these directions plainly intimate, that the gospel-minister is not to entangle himself with the affairs of this life, "that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier," 2 Tim. ii. 4. He is to make full proof of his ministry, 2 Tim. iv. 5.; and in order to this, he is to give attendance to reading, exhortation, to doctrine. He is *not to neglect* the gift that is in him, which was given with the laying on of the hands of the *Presbytery*. He is to meditate upon these things, to give himself *wholly* to them, that his profiting may appear to all. He is to take heed to himself and to his doctrine, to *continue* in them, for in doing this he should both save himself, and them that hear him, 1 Tim. iv. 13,—16.

Are these things consistent with an occasional ministry? Or can that person be said *to make full proof of his ministry, or to continue in it*, to whom the preaching of the gospel, and the other duties of the ministerial office, appear only as a job at by-hours, and not his stated and constant employment? Or is it reasonable to suppose that that God, who is the God of order in all the churches, would tolerate an evil in any of these, which he has expressly condemned in civil life? It is enjoined upon every man that he attend to the duties of his own station, and do his own business, Rom. xii. 6,—8. 1 Thess. iv. 11. And that he abide in the same calling wherein he is called, 1 Cor. vii. 20. These passages of scripture not only recommend diligence in business, but also steadiness of application to the duties of a particular calling, in opposition to the roving temper of some men, who cannot settle long at any one thing, but are continually shifting about from one secular calling to another. If it is unbecoming in a professor of religion to change his secular calling every season, how can it be consistent with the adorning of his profession to be in the full exercise of the ministerial office to-day, and a merchant, or a mechanic, to-morrow? If steadiness of application to the duties of a particular calling is binding upon all those who have a secular calling to attend to, it is impossible that they can be at liberty, even for a short time, to engage in the work of a gospel minister, which is an enterprise of a very different nature. Ministers of the gospel are not at liberty to throw down their office when they please: And where any of them enter into the spirit of their office, they will not lay it down for

any worldly consideration whatever. And to me it is inconceivable how other men should have a toleration to take it up and lay it down whenever they think proper.

But, admitting that an occasional ministry was in itself lawful, there is little reason to apprehend that much good will flow from it. The duties of the ministerial office are so numerous and important, that they require the whole time, and talents, and attention of the minister of the gospel, and also the greatest seclusion from the bustle of worldly occupations, lest any of them should be neglected—There is much required of him in point of preparation for the pulpit. Since the days of the apostles, I know of no class of men who, in ordinary cases, have any encouragement to expect the aid of the Holy Spirit, where preparation has been neglected. The talents of some men are so very remarkable, that they can make a tolerable appearance in public with far less preparation than others. But I know of no case where this is to be overlooked altogether. And if any person, trusting to the excellency of his gifts, will venture to address a popular assembly without pre-meditation, where this might have been attended to, I know of no law which compels that assembly to sit and hear him. Without study and application, his discourses will soon prove disgusting to the intelligent part of his audience; his profiting will appear to none, neither will he be able to bring out of the gospel-treasure things new as well as old.

But we by no means form a just estimate of what a minister of the gospel is bound to perform, if we attend only to that service which he is called to dis-

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charge in public. This is the least laborious part of his employment, and appears to be a kind of recreation, in comparison with the numerous and laborious services to which his attention must be directed in private. Not to mention a very important, and peculiarly difficult part of his work, in which he is to appear in the character of an ecclesiastical ruler, has he not much employment in visiting from house to house, animating and exciting the several families under his charge to the various duties of personal, social, and public religion? Are there none under his ministry who are in a state of bodily affliction, and who, upon making their case known to him, have encouragement to expect that he will testify his sympathy by visiting and praying over them? Are there not others who are in the greatest deeps of spiritual distress, and who have even a better claim to his sympathy than the former? Has he not much to do for his people in the way of praying for them, catechising, exhorting, and the like? When the duties connected with the ministerial office are examined, they appear to be so numerous, and of such importance, that there cannot be a regular execution of them by any person who does not make the work of a minister his principal, nay, his only employment. By an occasional ministry, the largest proportion of the duties of his office are neglected, and if the souls of men shall perish through this neglect, it had been better for that man never to have intermeddled with such work as this.—From these considerations it is manifest, that those who have no apparent probability of being disengaged from the things of the world, so as to attend to all the du-

ties of the ministerial office, and continue in it, can have no scriptural call to the office of a gospel-minister.

6. Ordination by persons in office likewise belongs to this call. It is an old maxim, "that it belongs to order to ordain." And if those who are installed into the office of a gospel-minister do not take cognizance of those who are to come after them, order must cease in the church. It was enjoined upon the first ministers, that that ministry which they had received they should commit unto faithful men, who might be able to teach others also. And, lest they should mistake in a matter of so great importance to the church, they were to lay hands suddenly on no man, but to proceed with the greatest caution and deliberation. These directions plainly recognise the powers of ecclesiastical office-bearers to send forth, in an authoritative manner, other labourers into the spiritual vineyard; and, at the same time, do flatly condemn the practice of all those who take up any office in the church at their own hand. There are few offices in civil life to which a person can be admitted without a previous trial; and this cannot certainly be less requisite for those who are to be employed about the eternal interests of men, than for such as are to be entrusted with some managements which bear a relation only to this life. There is no man who is a competent judge in his own cause; and there is no cause in which a man is less capable of judging with impartiality, than that which relates to his personal gifts and endowments. We are naturally blind to our own defects, but disposed to magnify every little endowment which we possess. Nor can any

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class of men be supposed better qualified to fit as judges in a case of this nature, than those who have filled the same office themselves, and who know, from experience, what talents are peculiarly requisite for a minister of the gospel. Upon the head of mere expediency, the plan of Presbyterians is greatly preferable to that of Independents, where the body of the faithful claim it as their right to fit as judges upon the qualifications of the candidate for office; and especially to the modern scheme of Independency, where every man is admitted to be sole judge of his own abilities, and may appear in a public station in the church or not, as his own vanity, ambition, or false zeal may inspire him.

Where the directions of the word are of a general nature, what is most expedient for the edifying of the body ought to be attended to, as the rule of procedure. But in the case before us, we are not left to mere conjecture, in a matter of such moment unto the church, viz. Whether persons may take this office upon themselves? Or whether they shall be tried and appointed by a society for propagating the gospel at home or abroad, who have uniformly disclaimed the idea of arrogating to themselves the powers of a church court, but have as uniformly acted as though they possessed all those powers? Or whether they shall be appointed by persons in public office in the church? The direction of the word is most particular and pointed here. The ministry they have received they are to commit unto others; and this direction is illustrated by many examples in the New Testament scriptures. But the trial of gifts is not the only thing in which office-bearers are to be employed, in the examination of the

the qualifications of candidates for office. The strictest investigation is to be made with respect to the religious and moral character, and also the orthodoxy in the faith, of candidates. Where no investigation of these obtains, the church has no security against men of loose principles and immoral lives coming into public office. And where so many false prophets are gone abroad into the world, there is the greatest need why satisfying evidence in these things should be required and obtained. Satan has often transformed himself into an angel of light, that he might the more readily deceive; and it is not the first time that the emissaries of this subtle enemy have gone forth, pretending the greatest love and compassion to the souls of men, while the principles which they propagated had the most direct tendency to destroy both the temporal and eternal interests of men. Every person who goes forth pretending to preach Christ, without having previously submitted his principles and character to the investigation of the office-bearers in the church, certainly lays himself open to every suspicion of this nature.

Besides this investigation of the principles, character, and other qualifications of the candidate, there ought to be a solemn designation of him to his work, by fasting, prayer, and the imposition of hands*. In this manner Paul and Barnabas were separated

* Some persons have supposed that the friends of Lay-preaching are not proceeding in such an irregular manner as at the beginning of this business, since those ministers, who have been admitted to the pastoral charge of particular congregations, have all of them been ordained. But when one peruses the account of these ordinations,

parated to their work among the Gentiles, Acts xiii. 2, 3. The hands of the Presbytery were laid upon Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 14. and he is directed to proceed in the same manner with others, 1 Tim. v. 22.

tions, he is strongly tempted to suppose that they are not regarded as ordinances of Jesus Christ; but rather as a sort of deception to Scotsmen, who have been so long accustomed to Presbyterian forms, that they will not readily submit to the ministrations of men upon whom the hands of the Presbytery were never laid. They do not admit that any office-power is conferred by ordination. On the contrary, it is a received principle with them, that the right to preach the gospel is as good before as after it. When Messrs Ballantyne and Cleghorn were ordained, the gentleman who preached the ordination-sermon avowed this principle in the face of the assembly, declaring, That "the right of our Scotch brethren to preach the gospel the day before their ordination, was as unquestionable as it is to-day." And that "the suitability of the thing alone bespoke its utility." When the church at Thurso was formed, and Mr Ballantyne admitted to the pastoral inspection of it, there was as great deference paid to the ministrations of Lay-preachers as to those of ordained men. Three different ministers were employed upon that occasion: but it was thought proper that a Lay-brother should also take a share in the public work, and reprove, rebuke, exhort, with the same authority that the rest did. And, that the cause of Lay-preaching might be set as high as possible, their brother behaved to begin and conclude the solemn services of the day!! See Miss. Mag. Vol. III. page 159.—Vol. IV. page 523, 524.

III.—The

III.—*The PRINCIPLES and TENDENCY of the Scheme of LAY-PREACHING considered.*

AS the great bulk of mankind are little accustomed to the exercise of close reflection, the plausibility of any scheme is apt to strike their attention, and make a far deeper impression upon their minds than the most solid arguments will do. When popular arguments are a-wanting, others will have little weight. The scheme of Lay-preaching has something in its appearance which is exceedingly plausible. It is proposed by it to convey the knowledge of the gospel to those who are in a great measure destitute of it, especially to such as are considered in the character of *heathens at home*. This is sufficient to form a party in the breast of a genuine believer, and, provided this object can be attained, he is in danger of overlooking any irregularities which may occur in the pursuit. What is of more value than a soul? and what is a man profited though he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or who can dare to forbid those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious from going forth, and in the most public manner possible, proclaiming the riches of divine grace, that others may be saved? While the object of Lay-preaching is the very same with that of an instituted ministry, many plausible things may be said in its defence. The friends of the scheme have availed themselves of this, and, by their good words and fair speeches, have deceived the hearts, and shaken from their steadfastness, many of the simple and unwary. It becomes therefore necessary to attend
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a little more particularly to the principles and tendency of the scheme than has been done in the preceding sections. The following things are none of the least plausible, and merit a particular consideration here.

I. The success with which the scheme has been attended, is frequently urged in its defence.

If the success of any undertaking were a sufficient proof of the lawfulness or propriety thereof, then, upon this principle, the most iniquitous measures might be vindicated, and the blackest deeds which ever were performed could have no evil in them. It is not always the best cause which has the greatest number of friends upon its side. Nor is every mean which is employed in the defence, even of a good cause, such as the law of God requires. It is not denied, that Lay-preachers may have been instrumental in rousing some careless sinners, and of converting others to the faith of the gospel; but it will not from thence follow that such a ministry is warrantable, any more than it can be inferred that violent settlements in vacant congregations are perfectly consistent with the scripture-rule, because the ministry of some intruders has been crowned with very eminent success. Our brethren would reckon it uncharitable, if so much as a suspicion were entertained, that their labours were in no case crowned with success: equally uncharitable would it be to suppose that the labours of all intruders were in vain. But upon the same principle that the former maintain their right to preach, the latter may defend the propriety of those measures which were employed in establishing their relation to a particular part of the Church. The Lord

Lord can make the wrath of man to praise him: he has frequently taken occasion, through the blind zeal and folly of men, to manifest his glory in doing good to souls; but we cannot from thence infer, that what they did was such as he approved, or for the imitation of others, unless we were at the same time to admit, that folly and blind zeal were not only harmless, but greatly to be commended. The little success with which the ministrations of Isaiah, and some other prophets of the Lord were attended, did not invalidate their mission; neither will the great success of an ultroneous preacher establish his. The goodness of the intention will not justify a bad action; neither will the success of any scheme prove, that the measures pursued were such as should be justified. There are many who have acquired the silver and gold of this world in great abundance; but, if they looked back upon the means which were employed in the acquisition of this wealth, they would have great cause of shame. The thief and the robber may have all that success which their hearts can desire; yet no man will certainly aver, that because they have been successful in their depredations, they are therefore free of blame, and that robbery and theft are consistent with the law of God.

2. The criminal negligence of permitting others to perish, while it is in our power to afford them the means of relief, is likewise adduced in support of the cause of Lay-preaching.

If this negligence springs from inattention to the duties of that station in which a person is placed, he is certainly chargeable with much blame; and whenever inquisition is made for blood, the doom

of this wicked and slothful servant will be very awful. But I do not recollect a single text of scripture where it is so much as hinted, that the blood of any audience, or of any individual, will ever be required at the hand of another, for not having given warning by a public ministry in the word, except in the case of those who fill a public station in the church, but neglect the duties of it. Of faithless watchmen, the blood of the citizens will be required; but, that private citizens should be punished for not having discharged the duties of watchmen, while they were never called to the office, is contrary both to scripture and reason. By the law of God we are commanded to love one another, and to express that sincere affection we owe unto others by employing every mean, which is competent for us, to promote both their temporal and eternal interests; but that law never requires us to step beyond our own sphere to do good unto any man; on the contrary, it expressly condemns such a practice: and those who are guilty of it, are generally looked upon with an evil eye, as being officious persons, busy-bodies, and intermeddlers in what does not belong to them.

Private Christians have many ways in which they may be useful to one another, without interfering in the smallest degree with any part of that service which is peculiar to a gospel-minister: and, were they more attentive to the duties of their station, the church would not have the one-half of the molestation she is now meeting with from officious and intermeddling men. In the several families to which they belong, they never want opportunities of being more or less useful; and where

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heads of families are inattentive to the duties of their families, they have much to account for. They may likewise be very useful to one another by stated meetings for religious conversation and prayer, and also by their occasional interviews.

But what is all this to the heathen at home? Though in our neighbourhood, they are not supposed to belong to these families, nor admitted to a seat in any praying society. But, brethren, if there is no probability that a godly example will have any influence, where have you encouragement to expect that your efforts will be more successful? The apostle supposes that some unbelieving husbands might be won, without the word, by the godly conversation of their wives. Example has generally a more powerful influence than precept, and could I perceive that family duties were more attended to by professors than formerly, I would consider this as a more hopeful sign that reformation would soon become general, than to be told that Itinerants were swarming like locusts in every part of the country.—Diligence in those lawful callings in which they are engaged is another way in which they may be useful to others. The apostle exhorts, that they should labour, working with their hands the thing which is good, that they may have to give to him that needeth, Eph. iv. 28. How few are these who seem to think that a secular calling should be prosecuted with such a liberal design! The scheme of Lay-preaching is in no wise favourable to it. On the contrary, it calls away the gifted brother from his proper business, even though a poor neighbour should be starving at his door, and he has not a single penny, beyond

beyond what is necessary to the expenditure of his own family, to throw for his relief.—To enumerate all those ways in which private Christians may be useful to one another is not intended here, neither would it be practicable. These are so various, that they are more than sufficient to engross the time and talents of each, without leaving any room for Lay-preaching itinerancies.

3. The obligations under which persons lie to make the best use that they can of the talents they have received, have likewise been pressed in to support this cause.

The answer which is contained in the preceding paragraph will serve, in part, as an answer to what is now stated respecting gifts. It will readily be admitted that every man is bound to make the best possible improvement of whatever talents he has received. The slothful servant, who wrapped up his lord's talent in a napkin, is characterised as a wicked servant, and met with that punishment to which his slothful disposition exposed him. But the Judge of all the earth does right. He does not reap where he did not sow, neither does he inquire about the improvement of talents which he never gave. The gift of office which Timothy received by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, is not the common privilege of all them that believe. How absurd than to say, that persons are under obligations to go and preach, while the gift of office is not received by them! Timothy was warned, not to forget the gift that was in him, and all other persons are warned not to forget theirs; but the direction must be received in a suitableness to the particular case of each individual. Is any man called

to the office of a gospel-minister? let him not forget the station he occupies: let him be instant in season and out of season: let him reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine. Has another no scriptural call to this office? let him attend to the duties of the station in which a wise Providence has fixed him. And while he has no call to move in a public sphere, he can be under no obligations to employ any of his talents in this manner. When persons step beyond their own sphere, this never fails to be an abuse, instead of a proper improvement of the talents they have received.

4. The liberty which has been exercised by Laymen, in writing and publishing books for the instruction of others, has been frequently adduced in defence of the cause of Lay-preaching.

Writing and preaching ought never once to be compared together. The first of these is merely a *human* invention, while the last is an ordinance of Jesus Christ. And they who would place the one upon an equality with the other, or, from the universal right of writing, would infer the universal right of preaching, seem yet to be unacquainted with what is properly intended by preaching. There are many who consider the preaching of the gospel as carrying nothing more in it, than a bare promulgation of gospel-truth. And, provided the truth can be published, to them it is a matter of very little consequence whether it be by writing or preaching, or whether it be by the tongue of a man or the sound of a trumpet. Influenced by this mistaken opinion, there are many who remain at home upon the Sabbath, pretending that they can receive

receive as much instruction by the perusal of printed sermons, as they can expect to receive from a pulpit-discourse. Were preaching nothing more than a declaration of the truth to the understanding of the hearer, these persons would certainly be in the right; and were Lay-preaching nothing more than a simple declaration of the truth, I confess I would find no fault with it. On the contrary, if this is all that is intended by Lay-preaching, every Christian is a man of this character.

In preaching Christ, there is no doubt a declaration of truth to the understanding, but there is also a particular and pointed address to the conscience of the hearer: and both these are to be done with that ministerial authority, wherewith the Head of the church has invested those who are called and sent by him. In subordination to the divine glory, the great object of gospel-preaching is the renovation of the hearts of men. The storing the mind with the knowledge of the great doctrines and duties of Christianity, is only an inferior consideration. And, that sinners may be won to Christ, ministers are to intreat, beseech, and rebuke, with *all authority*. They are to *compel* sinners to come in, that the house of Christ may be filled. Ministers, in virtue of those office-powers with which they are invested, have a claim to be heard. They speak in the name of the great God: by his authority they warn and intreat: as *ambassadors* for Jesus Christ, they beseech sinners to be reconciled unto God. But though a person should write many volumes, I know of no claim he has upon the public to read them. And though a Lay-preacher should address a popular assembly as an ambassador of Je-

sus Christ, I know of no powers with which he is invested to act in this manner, and he can have no claim upon any person to receive him as such.

Having exposed the fallacy of the principle, contained in some of the most plausible arguments which have been brought forward in defence of Lay-preaching, before concluding this section, it will be necessary to advert a little to the tendency of this scheme.—When persons have it in view to engage in any great enterprise, which has at least the appearance of novelty, if they act wisely they will consider deliberately what is likely to be the consequences of it. And if there is every ground to fear that it will be productive of more harm than good, no man of prudence would wish to embark with them. The object of Lay-preaching is good. No idea can be more noble than that of gathering sinners to Christ, by carrying the gospel of salvation to them. But if the method employed for this great design is contrary to the infallible rule of the word of God, this scheme of conveyance can be nothing but a human invention; and there is every reason to fear that the enemy of souls will serve his own purposes by it.

1st, In a particular manner this scheme is calculated to introduce the wildest *confusion* into the church. It throws down the whole fence of discipline and good order, and abolishes at once all distinctions between public and private characters in the house of God. Where every man's will is his own law, and where no man is obliged to submit the trial of his gifts unto others, but may exercise them in the public ministry of the word, or not, as his own inclination prompts him, it is manifest that

confusion

confusion must follow. Were private subjects to take the reins of government into their own hands, we could look for nothing but disorder in the state; and, when private Christians arrogate to themselves those office-powers which belong to the ministers of the church, we can expect nothing better there. A spirit of anarchy is a necessary consequence of the scheme. And the effects of it are too visible in many parts of the country already. Where the seeds of the pernicious doctrine of Lay-preaching have taken root, a plentiful crop of the wild gourds of confusion have sprung up in many congregations which were peaceable, and eminent also for religion before. In many others, the attention of the members has been diverted from matters of the greatest importance, to questions which engender strife, rather than godly edifying: such contendings seem to threaten the utter extermination of vital religion from among them. Much has been said with respect to the success of our Itinerants in the north of Scotland. Unless it be that they have gained a considerable number of profelytes to their scheme, and have kindled a flame among the real friends of evangelical doctrine, which is raging with the greatest violence there, I know of little thing else they can boast of.

2dly, The scheme of Lay-preaching is calculated to bring the office of a gospel ministry into contempt, and thereby to frustrate the great design of that office. There is nothing which can have a more immediate tendency to frustrate the design of any office, than to fill it with persons who are totally unfit for it. When every babblers is permitted to enter a pulpit, the office of a gospel-minister will

no longer be accounted sacred, nor will the gospel-message meet with a cordial reception. The state of religion in England, during the usurpation of Oliver Cromwell, affords a mournful proof of this. We have been frequently told, that Lay-preaching is no new thing in England. Every person who is acquainted with the history of that period must know this: and must likewise know, that the most dismal consequences flowed from it. The avarice and immorality of the clergy of the church of Rome never brought the office of a gospel-minister into greater contempt, than the English Lay-preachers did, in the time of the Usurper: Nor did the cause of vital and experimental religion receive a deeper wound, in any period of English history, than it did then. To this day it is never yet healed of that wound; for every thing which has the appearance of seriousness is still branded by the name of *Enthusiasm*. And what reason have we to expect that the scheme of Lay-preaching will have a more favourable issue among us? In the States of North America, the rage for Lay-preaching, as far as I know, has never been so great as in England. Something like the form of trial and ordination has generally been observed. But in many cases it is nothing more than a mere form. The rapid manner in which candidates for office are hurried through their academical studies, has long and justly been complained of by the most learned, evangelical, and pious clergy there. It is not uncommon, in many parts of that extensive country, to find persons belonging to the Presbyterian church, ordained to the charge of large congregations, who only two years before, had been following the plough.

One fatal consequence of this method of procedure has been, that there are few parts of the world, in which any thing like a taste for evangelical doctrine is to be found, where a gospel-minister is less respected than in America. And such are the prejudices of many religious congregations there against their own clergy, that, when a vacancy takes place in them, if they have any prospect of receiving a minister from Scotland, they will wait for years upon him, rather than invite any of their own to break the bread of life among them. But this evil must operate with far greater force among us, if Itinerants start up, like gourds, in a night. Unless these gourds wither also in a night, the consequences, as to the office and success of a gospel-minister, are likely to be very mournful.

3dly, This scheme is peculiarly calculated for the dissemination of the most pernicious errors and delusions among men. Men of false principles have always manifested a peculiar keenness to make proselytes; and as corrupt reason is much more ready to embrace error than truth, they have been too successful. There is no society where all the members remain any considerable time pure. This individual and the other begin to drink of the polluted streams of corrupt doctrine; and if any of these happen to sustain a public character in the church, unless they are speedily reclaimed or cut off, the poison of their doctrine will be widely diffused. The scheme of Lay-preaching furnishes no antidote against this evil. On the contrary, it opens a wide door to it. For, if the office-bearers in the church have no right to judge respecting the gifts and orthodoxy in the faith of those who are to commence

Itinerants,

Itinerants, they have certainly as little right to call any Lay-brother to an account, though he were ever so heretical and immoral. If the right to preach flows from the possession of gifts, and an opportunity in providence to exercise them, the heretic has as good a right to preach his gospel, as the most orthodox believer has to preach his. If it should be answered, that no man can have any right to preach error; this will readily be admitted, but what man is there who believes himself to be an heretic? Though the human mind may embrace the most damnable delusions, it can receive none of them under the idea of their being such. It receives them under the notion of truths, and as soon as it begins to view them in any other light, it will reject them. The heretic therefore must be persuaded of his own orthodoxy, and, of consequence, must look upon those who differ in opinion from him, as persons to whom the odious term of heretic ought to be applied. And if this man happens to be tinctured with principles in favour of Lay-preaching, and has drunk in any thing of the spirit of that scheme, he must certainly conclude that he has a far better right to preach his orthodox faith, than any heretical Calvinist can have to preach his. I know of nothing which scattered the seeds of Arminianism, and other corrupt doctrines, more widely and more speedily in England than this scheme: and as long as similar causes produce similar effects, there is reason to fear that if it is prosecuted in Scotland, it will have the same influence in destroying the souls of men.

Evils of a very flagrant kind obtain in many Presbyterian churches. Quite another gospel is preached

preached by many of the ministers in some of these, than the gospel of Jesus Christ. But these evils do not spring from the constitution of a Presbyterian church. True Presbytery carries in it a remedy against them: and where this remedy is not applied, it is because corruption is so general, that those who are lamenting the evil can make no successful opposition to it. In the case of the church of Scotland, this is manifest. What are all the efforts of the orthodox party, in the General Assembly of that church, for constitutional rights, and the vigorous exercise of discipline, but beating the air? The other party are now become the most numerous. To hear of any public teacher being expelled from her communion, because he was either an Arminian or a Socinian, would be far more unexpected, than to hear that a man of this description was retained within her pale. But whatever may be the case in a church as established by the law of the land, where the office-bearers of a church are acting agreeably to the constitution of the kingdom of Christ, they have sufficient means to guard against any of their members preaching error. How different is the case of the churches of the Secession, and that of the church of Scotland. It is now more than half a century since the Secession church arose; and to this day the same doctrine of a free salvation is preached in every pulpit belonging to the Associate Synods. No sooner did any of their teachers venture to propagate any heretical doctrine, than they were taken notice of by the courts to which they belonged; and were either reclaimed, or thrown out of their communion. In this manner, they have manifested that the constitution of a

Presbyterian

Presbyterian church is one of the best bulwarks against error. How different is the scheme of Lay-preaching? There is nothing in it to reclaim an offender. It has as little to put the people upon their guard against the pernicious doctrine of a false teacher. It opens the widest door for every heretic to enter in, and to publish his delusions among his fellow-men.

4thly, The scheme of Lay-preaching has a powerful tendency to foster the pride, ambition, and vain-glory of the carnal mind. When a man takes it into his head, that he has talents sufficient to address a popular assembly upon the things of God, and is at the same time filled with the love of fame; if that person is moving in one of the humblest spheres of life, it is easy to see how the corruptions of his heart would operate. There are few men who do not possess as much vanity as to imagine that they can speak well. "Be swift to hear, slow to speak," is a very irksome precept unto many. And where a boundless toleration is granted, unto all who imagine themselves gifted, to preach unto others, a door is thrown wide open unto multitudes to commence Itinerants, who have got nothing else than ambition and a love of fame to urge them on.

5thly, I have always been accustomed to entertain a much better opinion of those who have taken an active part in the Lay-preaching scheme, than to imagine that they intend any thing hostile to the State. No evidence has ever been brought forward, either against them or their adherents, that they have any such object in view. At the same time, I am persuaded, that the arrows of particular principles will sometimes fly much farther than those intended

who

who drew the bow. If the distinction betwixt public and private characters were abolished in the church, it would go more than half-way to destroy that reverence which is due to the office-bearers in the State. When independency was the favourite system of the one, we know what sort of government prevailed in the other. The connexion and influence of men's political and religious principles are far greater than many of them seem to be aware of. I could not fail to remark this at the time when the spirit of political parties was running so very high in this country. When the measures pursued by many for State-reformation appeared, as if nothing short of a complete revolution had been intended; and when all titles of distinction were comprehended under the favourite name of *Citizen*, the minds of multitudes began to veer towards independency in the church. And no sooner were their noisy declamations silenced in their cabals and conventions, than they began to raise their voice in the church. Before the great question, of the right of universal suffrage in the State was discussed, they proceeded to recommend the universal right of all gifted brethren to preach in the church!!

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IV.—A

IV.—*A CANDID EXAMINATION of some passages of SACRED SCRIPTURE, which have been interpreted as favouring the scheme of LAY-PREACHING.*

THE different denominations of Christians, have each endeavoured to support the peculiar tenets of their party, by arguments and quotations from the Scriptures. Where these are received as the only rule of faith and manners, every man will endeavour to shew, that the religious principles espoused by him are founded upon, and agreeable to the word of God. It is impossible, however, that that book, which is given by inspiration of God, can contain any jarring or inconsistent opinions. There must be the greatest harmony among its several parts: Contradictions never can obtain, where the whole has been committed to writing under the immediate guidance of that Spirit, who never causeth to err. But while prejudice and a party-spirit are so predominant, there will be the greatest diversity of sentiment with respect to the precise meaning which the Holy Ghost intended to convey by the words which he has uttered. In the controversy before us, appeals have been frequently made unto the Scriptures, and many passages have been adduced and commented upon, as favouring the scheme of Lay-preaching. It is necessary that we attend to these passages, and examine whether they will bear the interpretation which has been put upon them, or not.

Here the limits of our enquiry are considerably abridged, in comparison with what would have been necessary

necessary, when this controversy was first agitated in Scotland. The friends of the scheme, with a degree of candour which does them much honour, have acknowledged that several passages they had quoted, "do not immediately refer to the point in hand, but rather to the mutual exercise of gifts among church-members." It is hoped, that upon a more deliberate review of these passages which they still retain in their service, they will find, that many more besides those they have relinquished "do not immediately refer to the point in hand," but to some other subject. The limits intended for this pamphlet will not admit that we enter upon a review of the whole, neither is it necessary. The subject of these passages, or their scope and connexion are so foreign to the business of Lay-preaching, that the unprejudiced mind, almost at first sight, will perceive, that the principle of the scheme does not receive the smallest countenance from them. It may therefore suffice to select a few, where appearances are most favourable for Lay-preaching, and where the principal stress of the argument in its defence has been laid.

Numb. xi. 29. "And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? *Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets*, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them."

When Jethro saw that Moses sat from morning till evening judging the people, he observed to him, "This thing is too heavy for thee, thou art not able to perform it thyself alone," Exod. xviii. 13. He therefore advised him to appoint inferior judges, who might hear and determine in those causes which were more simple, and reserve the consideration of

such as were of the greatest importance, or difficulty, for himself. By this wise institution, the burden of government could not fail to be a great deal lighter to Moses than it had formerly been. But the spirit of rebellion was so prevalent among the people, and causes of such difficulty and importance were brought so frequently before him, that he had still reason to make mention of its weight. But, as God will not lay upon any of his people more than what they are able to bear, he directed Moses as to those steps which were necessary, in order that this burden might be still more divided, and thereby diminished. He was to gather together seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom he was to bring to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and who were to take part with him in judging upon all matters of difficulty and importance. Two of the seventy who were nominated by Moses, *viz.* Eldad and Medad, remained in the camp. Whether they were detained by ceremonial uncleanness, or had not received intimation sufficiently pointed, with respect to the time and place of meeting, or whether from a principle of modesty they wished to decline this office, or what were the particular reasons of their stay, we are not informed. That God who turns every thing to a good account in the end saw meet to permit this. He testified his approbation of the choice of Moses, by the spirit of prophecy conferred upon all the seventy. No sooner was this spirit received, than they began to prophecy. The two men who remained in the camp were endowed with the same spirit, and they prophesied likewise.

It is probable that Joshua did not know, that the persons

persons who prophesied in the camp belonged to the number of those who were nominated by Moses; he was therefore disposed to consider their exercises as quite out of order; and, jealous for the honour of Moses, and those who were convened with him at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, he was no sooner informed that they prophesied, than he says unto Moses, "My lord Moses, forbid them." But Moses, with that meekness and true greatness of mind for which he was so distinguished, answered, as in the text under review, "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God," &c. From this the warrantableness of Lay-preaching has been inferred. If Moses might desire that all the Lord's people were in possession of the gift of prophecy, it has been alledged, that it is equally warrantable for such of this people as are in possession of those gifts which are requisite for a public ministry in the word, and have opportunities in providence to exercise them, to do this in the most public manner possible.

But this passage of Scripture, instead of defending, militates very powerfully against the scheme of Lay-preaching. It certainly proves, that all the Lord's people are *not* prophets, and where a person is not invested with that office, he can have no warrant to exercise it. If the Lay-brother could shew that he is invested with any public office in the church, he might adduce this text, to shew that he ought to discharge all the duties thereof; but he brings it forward with a very bad grace, in defence of preaching by persons not in office, while it is not pretended that the ultroneous preacher sustains any public character in the church whatever.

Only those who are prophets can have a right to prophecy; and though all the congregation should be holy, yet as long as they are not prophets, they have no right to do what is competent for prophets only to perform.

It deserves likewise to be mentioned here, that the prayer of Moses does not refer to gifts for teaching, but gifts for rule and government; and it would be far more natural to infer from it, that private subjects should usurp the office of a judge, than that private Christians should discharge the duties of a minister of the gospel. The occasion of this prayer refers immediately to those gifts which were necessary for rule and government. A regular ministry in the word had been instituted long before. Soon after the tribes of Israel had come into the wilderness, Aaron and his sons were consecrated to the priest's office, and the whole tribe of Levi were set apart as the public ministers for instructing the people. But there was no supreme court for matters of judgment, consisting of the heads of tribes till this time. And, as the prayer of Moses ought to be viewed in relation to the business for which these elders were convened, it is far more natural to suppose that he is here praying for a spirit of rule and government, than for a spirit of prophecy, strictly and properly so called. This is the very Spirit which the Lord promised to put upon those men, ver. 17. "I will take of the Spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone." It was certainly the same spirit that was promised, which was granted. And if the first refers to a spirit of rule,

rule, so does the last. It was this spirit that Joshua requested Moses to rebuke. But Moses, persuaded that the more this spirit prevailed among the people, the burden of government would be the lighter to the rulers, and the scourge of authority less severe unto the subjects, prays that it might be conferred upon the whole. And, as it is a spirit of government which is especially intended in this prayer, it is quite foreign to its design, when it is perverted to countenance the cause of Lay-preaching.

If it should be objected, that Eldad and Medad are said expressly to have prophesied, it is almost needless to remind the reader, that the term *prophecy* is not always used to denote the gift of declaring what is future, but is likewise used to express the gift of interpreting what was formerly delivered. And when these men are said to have prophesied, it intimates that they were now endowed with a very copious measure of the Spirit, whereby they were capable of understanding, interpreting, and applying the law to such particular cases as might come under their review. There is no magistrate, who wishes well to the interests of those over whom he rules, but would wish that a copious measure of this spirit were given unto them all. By it magistrates are taught what are those duties which are binding upon them towards the people, and are also inclined to discharge them; by the same spirit, subjects are instructed in the duties which are required of them, to those who are ordained of God to bear rule, and are likewise inclined to behave themselves as the meek and quiet of the land. This is the best oil to the wheels of a regular government.

But

But though it could be evinced, that Moses is here praying that all the Lord's people were prophets, in the strict and proper acceptation of the term, no argument could be deduced from it in support of the cause of Lay-preaching. We are to covet the best gifts; but we are no where directed to exercise even these in any other way than is competent for us in that station which we occupy in the church. Miraculous gifts are not now to be expected, and where those of a common nature are bestowed in an uncommon degree, it has been already shewn, that the mere possession thereof, gives no man a right to exercise them in any other way, than is competent for the station of life in which he is placed.

This prayer of Moses is eminently expressive of that public spirit, and true greatness of mind, which he possessed. In opposition to the groundless jealousies of Joshua for the honour of him who is styled, King in Jeshurun, Moses, without any dread of his losing a single grain of that respect which was due to his rank, could say, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets!" And, in opposition to all the silly prejudices which have been entertained against a regular ministry in the word, as if they wished to engross the whole honours of this high station among themselves, or were in the smallest degree afraid that their popularity should sink, by the untutored eloquence of Lay-preachers, there is not one of them, who has drunk in the spirit of their offices, but are daily praying, "that the Lord would pour out of his Spirit upon all flesh, so that they may no more need to teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, but that they may all

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know the Lord, from the least even to the greatest of them."

- 2 Chron. xvii. 7, 8, 9. "Also, in the third year of his reign, he sent to his princes, even to Ben-hail, &c.; and with them he sent Levites, even Shemaiah, &c.; and they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people."

The example of these princes, who were neither priests, Levites, nor prophets, has been frequently adduced in defence of Lay-preaching. But before this passage can be quoted in defence of such a ministry, this important matter must first be established, *viz.* that these princes were employed *precisely* in the same manner as the priests and Levites were. Unless this can be established, any argument from example here, can have no weight. There are different things suggested from the passage which give us ground to believe they were not.

First, There is a marked difference betwixt the characters sustained by these two classes of men. The one were princes, and the other were priests and Levites. The first were civil, and the last were ecclesiastical office-bearers; and it is far more natural to suppose, that these two classes of men appeared among the people, each in their respective stations, and in the discharge of the duties connected with them, than to imagine that this Itinerancy of theirs was pursued at the expence of confounding all distinctions between the civil and ecclesiastical authority in the country. Jehoshaphat was anxious to promote a thorough reformation, but he certainly intended to proceed according to order.

Secondly,

Secondly, If the princes were to be employed precisely in the same way as the priests and Levites were, why is there such particular notice taken of these last having carried the book of the law of the Lord their God with them, while there is no mention of the former having done this? If their employment was precisely the same, the one must have needed the book of the law as well as the other. Though the names of the princes are mentioned, and their employment is likewise stated, yet it is not till we are informed who the Levites and priests were, that we read of their carrying the book of the law with them. The place which this circumstance occupies in the history, furnishes with a very strong suspicion that the priests and Levites employed this great text-book in a manner different from the princes.

But it is said expressly, that he sent these princes to teach in the cities of Judah. It is as plainly asserted, Deut. xxxi. 22. "That Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel." No person can imagine that Moses, in his own person, could teach all the hundreds of thousands which pertained to the camp of Israel, all the words of this song. But in as much as those whose proper business it was to teach the people, did it at the commandment of Moses, it is said to have been done by him. In reference to the case more immediately before us, Jehoshaphat gave all that countenance to this Itinerancy which was competent for him to do. And that the ministers of religion might be protected and encouraged in this work, some of the chief noblemen of his court were sent along with them. And in as much as this business

was to be managed under the eye and influence of these princes, it is spoken of as something to be done by them; and all this could be performed, without either these noblemen becoming Lay-preachers, or the priests or Levites becoming princes.

But although these princes had been employed precisely in the same manner as the Levites and priests were, *viz.* in reading and expounding the law in the audience of the people, wherever they went, what is all this to the cause of Lay-preaching?—They were princes. Can our Lay-brethren pretend that they are heads of Clans, or rulers over the people?—They were princes of Judah. And there were many things competent for princes to perform, who were under a theocratical government, which would be very improper to be done now, since all the peculiarities of the Hebrew constitution are forever abolished.

Acts viii. 1, 4. "And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.—Therefore they that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word."

This passage of sacred history has been brought forward in defence of Lay-preaching with such a degree of assurance, that one cannot but regard it as the Goliath of the camp. With an unparalleled degree of confidence it has been affirmed, "Here it is obvious that not *delegated preachers*, but *the church in general*, proclaimed to their fellow-sinners the gospel of the Lord Jesus." "To evade this," says he, "were to affront common sense, and to oppose the usual

usual meaning of words." Whenever a person pays so little deference to the judgment of many able critics, who have gone before him, and who have considered this passage in quite a different light, and also makes use of language which is so very strong in expressing an opinion contrary to theirs; he never fails to lay himself open to a suspicion, that he may be using all this parade of vocabularies for want of better arguments.

There is some reason to doubt of the truth of the assertion, that the church in general, who were scattered abroad, preached the word, if it is considered that there might be infants in this dispersion; there might be persons who were not gifted; and there might likewise be females. These must necessarily be excepted, and the number of preachers cannot have been so great as this writer would have us believe. From this it is manifest that the term *all*, upon which the whole stress of the argument for Lay-preaching is laid, is to be understood with certain limitations and restrictions. And how far this limitation extends, the passage itself is sufficient to instruct us. It cannot refer to the church in general; for after this dispersion had taken place, there were still devout men at Jerusalem, who carried Stephen to his grave, and made great lamentation over him; there was likewise a church for Saul to make havock of, entering into every house, haling men and women, and committing them to prison. As it cannot refer to the church in general, nor to the dispersion in general, it must be understood of *the all* of some particular class, or description of persons. And who these are, the exception which is here made of the apostles may inform

form us. Why are the apostles so particularly excepted as not belonging to this dispersion, while we know that there were other Christians besides them at Jerusalem, if it is not to intimate, that those of this dispersion who went every where preaching the word, were persons of a *similar* character and description with the apostles? The apostles were men in office, and so were these persecuted preachers. And, accordingly, wherever we find any of the preachers of this dispersion mentioned afterwards, they are always spoken of as being persons who occupied a public station in the church. Philip is mentioned in the following verse as having gone down to Samaria, and preached Christ there. In the eleventh chapter, we are told that some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, preached to none but unto the Jews only. And whether these Itinerants were Lay-preachers or not, we learn from the thirteenth chapter, where the same persons are referred to, and described as being prophets and teachers.

If these Itinerants were Lay-preachers, it will be difficult to see what idea the writer of the Acts intended to convey by the word *therefore*. It cannot be supposed that their being persecuted or scattered abroad gave them any right to preach. The point of a sword, the terror of a gibbet, or the fury of a popular tumult, never had such virtue in them as to give any man a right to preach Christ. But if they are considered as persons of the same description with the apostles, his meaning is obvious. There were prophets, evangelists, and teachers among them, and because they were such, they ex-

exercised their ministry in those places whither they were scattered abroad.

The Greek word *εὐαγγελιζόμενοι*, which is used to set forth the ministry of these men, likewise deserves our attention. If the preaching that is intended here is to be understood of a public ministry in the gospel by a person not invested with any public office in the church, it is worthy of remark, that this is the only text in the New Testament where it is to be found having such a signification. If we allow the scriptures to speak for themselves, and be willing to ascertain the true meaning of any text by comparing it with others, where similar modes of expression are used, it will be found that there is not a single text to countenance the opinion, that the ministry of a Lay-preacher is intended. This word is no stranger in the scriptures. It occurs upwards of fifty times in them. And in all that variety of texts, it is invariably used to denote the ministry of a person invested with a sacred office. Besides the text under review, it occurs no less than four different times in this chapter. In verse 12. it is used to express the ministry of Philip; in verse 25. that of Peter and John; and in verse 35. and 40. it is used again as expressive of the ministry of Philip. In chap. xi. 20. it is used to denote that ministry which was exercised by those of this dispersion, whom we find, by chap. xiii. 1. to have been prophets and teachers. If fifty different texts can be adduced to shew that this word denotes a public ministry in the gospel by a person in office, and not a single text can be quoted to shew that it is ever used to denote the ministry of a Lay-preacher, it can be no affront upon common sense, nor is

it

it offering any violence to the usual meaning of this word, when it is denied that it can ever be established from this text, that the ministry of a Lay-preacher is warrantable.

May the great Redeemer arise and plead his own cause; may he shew to the generation the form and fashion of his house, the goings-out and the comings-in, with all the ordinances and laws thereof; then shall the knowledge and reputation of his ordinances revive, the divine ordinance of the gospel-ministry will be respected, and the labours of gospel-ministers crowned with the most abundant success. The harvest truly is plenteous, but chosen and faithful labourers are very few; let us therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest that he would *send* forth labourers into his harvest. They are such only as are *sent* by him who have ground to expect that they will return with joy, bringing their sheaves with them. They who run without his orders are exposing themselves to a severe frown, the people among whom they labour to much harm, and are affording another occasion to the unclean spirits triumphantly to say, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who art thou?"

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